

Casa Grande (Ruins)
Casa Grande National Monument
Coolidge, Pinal County, Arizona

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Arizona

Historic American Buildings Survey
Prepared at headquarters office
for District of Arizona

CASA GRANDE (Ruins)
Casa Grande National Monument, Pinal County
Arizona

Owner: U. S. Government, National Park Service.

Date of Erection: Prehistoric, Probably before 1450.

Builder: Unknown.

Architect: Unknown

Present Condition: Ruinous adobe walls, remains of large tower. Now protected from erosion by metal shed. Ruins of other smaller structures surround this tower.

Number of Stories: Two remaining. Entire first story is filled with earth. Believed to have been four stories high originally.

Materials of Construction: Solid adobe walls (Adobe is local mud, generally mixed with a vegetable binder, and dried in the sun until hard). The adobe was laid in courses, about 16" each, allowed to dry before the next course was applied. Walls here are very hard where protected from the weather. They are four feet thick at the base, diminishing in thickness toward the top. Surface is thin adobe plaster, inside and out. Wood poles used as lintels.

Other Existing Records: Description by Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, 1694.

Additional Data: (From mimeographed public information bulletin by U. S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, March 1938)

"Casa Grande National Monument, established to preserve interesting prehistoric ruins, is an area of 472.5 acres of typical desert land, covered with mesquite, creosote, and salt bush, located in the Gila Valley of south central Arizona at an altitude of 1,422 feet.

"Casa Grande, or "Great House," the main feature of this monument, is a burnt-out, dismantled group of solid adobe walls, ruins of a great building which at one time was four stories in

height. The standing walls are 4 feet thick at their base. The first recorded white man to visit the ruin was Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, founder of the Tumacacori Mission, who passed here in 1694 and wrote a description of the ruins, which at the time of his discovery must have been standing for over two centuries in about the same condition that they are today. In addition to the great building there are many ruins of other prehistoric dwellings, some of which may date back more than 1,200 years.

"This area was first established as a national reservation by Executive order of June 22, 1892, under authority contained in the act of Congress approved March 2, 1889, and was classified as a national park. Later, on December 10, 1909, the boundaries of the reservation were changed by the elimination of 120 acres on which there were no prehistoric ruins and the inclusion of a tract of 120 acres adjoining the reservation on the east, on which are located important mounds of historic interest. Finally, on August 3, 1918, by Presidential proclamation, the reservation was given national monument status.

"The history of the rise and fall of the civilization which built and inhabited the Casa Grande ruins is only conjectural, but the ruins themselves present much interesting material to the student. Possibly when these people came into the valley they were nomads, but the opportunities for a settled life devoted to agricultural pursuits must have appealed to them. Their first step was the construction of an irrigation system, the remains of which are still plainly visible. Then came the problem of housing and finally the need of defensive construction for protection from their enemies. The multistory house, of which the Casa Grande is the highest development, was probably evolved as a defensive measure. As a watchtower, it must have proved a good investment, for from its top a guard could observe the country within a radius of 10 miles. This was a great advantage, for if the enemy could be sighted at 10 miles, he, being on foot -- the horse was not yet on the American Continent -- would need two hours to get to the village, which gave time to get runners out into the fields and gather forces for the defense.

"When the valley people were at their most prosperous stage there were probably between 8,000 and 15,000 of them in the Gila and Salt River Valleys. They farmed extensively, raising cotton and corn, made baskets and pottery of a good quality, used stone, wood, and bone tools, used sea shells for decorations and ceremonies, and in general may be said to have lived in the late stages of the Stone Age. No useful metal implements have been found.

"It is postulated that raiding nomads became too strong for the valley dwellers, and year after year they lost a larger percentage of their crops and a larger number of warriors than they could

afford to lose, until they at last decided to abandon the country. It is believed that the Casa Grande was abandoned between 1,400 and 1,450 A. D."

Approved: *John P. Orm*Date: *Mar. 21, 1939,**reviewed 3/21/39/**JPJ*